



STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Insurance Building, PO Box 43113 • Olympia, Washington 98504-3113 • (360) 902-0555

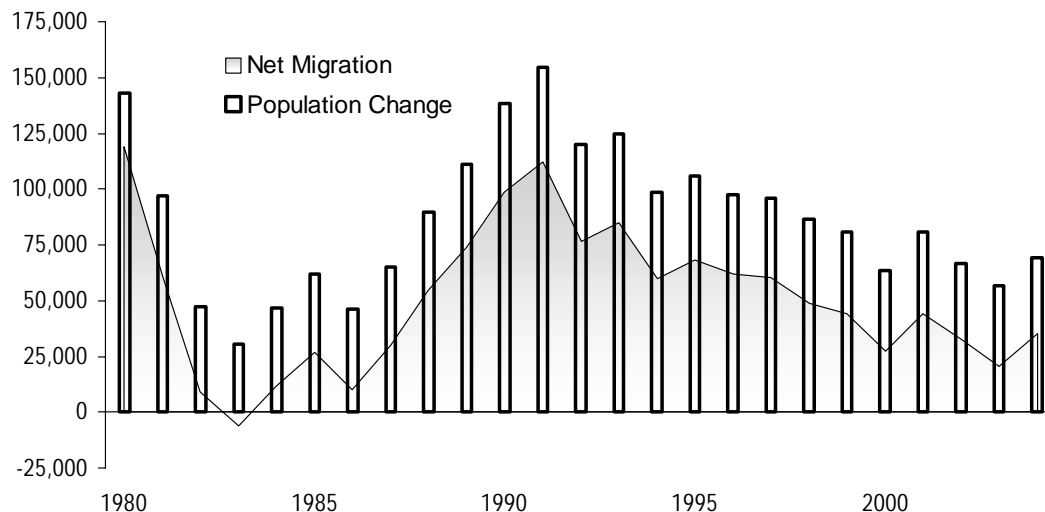
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Washington State's population growth begins to improve

OLYMPIA – Washington State's population growth—reflecting the improving economy—is beginning to show signs of change. Annual estimates prepared by the Office of Financial Management show the state's population increased to 6,167,800 in 2004—a gain of 69,500 over last year—or 1.1 percent. This compares to a lesser gain of 56,590, or 0.9 percent for 2003.

“This may just be the beginning of a solid rebound—fostered by improved payroll employment figures in Washington since June 2003, and even faster improvements since January 2004,” Theresa Lowe, the state's chief demographer, said. Population gains usually follow employment increases by six to 12 months.

State growth shows modest gain



The state appears to be in a good position to continue gaining in population. The state forecast shows annual population growth slowly increasing from the current level of 69,500 to about 86,000 by 2010, or at an annual growth rate of 1.3 percent. "Migration has always been a large part of our state's growth. So, where we actually go from here really depends on how fast Washington's economy recovers and how that recovery stacks up against what other states have to offer in terms of job opportunities," Lowe said.

The Census 2000 population count marks the baseline for tracking a new decade of population change in the state. The majority of growth since 2000 remains concentrated in Western Washington, with the largest four-year gains being increases of 51,254 in King County, 43,182 in Pierce County, 38,776 in Snohomish County and 38,062 in Clark County.

The fastest growing counties – in terms of percentage change – are Franklin County (15.5 percent), Clark County (11.0 percent), Benton County (8.9 percent) and Kittitas County (7.3 percent). Franklin County was recently ranked by the U.S. Bureau of the Census as being among the top 100 counties with the fastest annual growth rate for 2003.

The population of Washington's cities and towns totaled 3,772,574 on April 1 this year, up 253,024 over the 2000 federal census count. Annexations and incorporations account for about 113,400 of this increase. There have been no new incorporations over the last year. Spokane Valley in Spokane County, incorporating in March 2003, remains Washington's newest city.

Detailed information on the April 1, 2004, population estimates for cities, towns and counties is on the Office of Financial Management web page at www.ofm.wa.gov/pop/april1/index.htm.

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Contact: Theresa Lowe, Office of Financial Management, 360-902-0588